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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 000949

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: GOF CONCERNED ABOUT SYRIA BUT HESITANT ABOUT ISOLATING SARG

REF: STATE 159137

Classified By: PolChief Gregory Thome, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) DCM delivered subject demarche to MFA Undersecretary for Political Affairs Markus Lyra. The GOF has not received a request from Syria for a high level meeting at the UNGA, but Lyra said he would communicate our request to Finland's UNGA delegation. He fully agreed that Syria has failed to take adequate steps to stop those using its territory to support the insurgency in Iraq and that its human rights record remains very poor. Lyra described Syria's withdrawal from Palestine as one positive step, but lamented that Syrian hard-liners continue to quash nearly all internal structural reform efforts.

¶2. (C) That said, Lyra expressed concern about the potential impact of further isolating Syria. The SARG clearly feels isolated by the international community already, he said, and this has prompted it to seek closer ties with Russia, China and Ukraine -- all developments that Finland does not view as being in its own interests. Lyra agreed that the international community must stand firm in demanding that the SARG change its behavior and implement structural reforms. However, he stopped short of endorsing isolation as the means of communicating those demands.

MACK